

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2021: *Isaiah: "Comfort My People"*

Lesson 8 "Comfort My People"

Read for this week's study

Isaiah 40:1, 2; Isaiah 40:3–8; Isaiah 40:9–11; Isaiah 40:12–31.

Memory Text

"Get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!' " (Isaiah 40:9, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Comfort for the Future (*Isaiah 40:1, 2*)
- III. Presence, Word, and Roadwork (*Isaiah 40:3–8*)
- IV. The Birth of Evangelism (*Isaiah 40:9–11*)
- V. Merciful Creator (*Isaiah 40:12–31*)
- VI. The Problem with Idolatry (*Isaiah 40:19, 20*)
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. The first seven lessons explored chapters 1-39, which was Isaiah's message of judgment and hope for Jerusalem (chs. 1-12) and the nations (chs. 13-27). Isaiah accused Israel's leaders of rebellion against God and said that first through Assyria and then Babylon, Israel's kingdom would come crashing down in an act of God's judgment.
2. Chapters 28-39 dealt with the rise and fall of Jerusalem, illustrated by Hezekiah's rise and fall. Thus ch. 39 concluded with Isaiah predicting Jerusalem's fall to Babylon and the subsequent exile. A hundred years after Isaiah it all sadly came to pass.
3. What will move unclean Israel to actually trust God and become messengers of God's unique calling to serve the lost world? What will make it possible for sinful Israel to become holy? The answer is God's grace (Romans 2:4). Chs. 40-48 present God's grace as a motivating factor: Yahweh has not cast Israel off, instead he chose Israel as his servant. Ch. 40 addresses three questions that Jewish exiles would be asking: 1) Does Yahweh *want* to deliver us (vs. 1-11)? 2) *Can* Yahweh deliver us (vs.

- 12-26)? 3) *Will* Yahweh deliver us (vs. 27-31)? Answering these questions affirmatively, Isaiah establishes the foundation of divine grace in chs. 41-55.
4. What is the significance of 40:1-2? (Sunday's lesson) On what basis do people choose to preach/convey either the 'straight testimony' or a message of comfort? What does the world need to hear before the second coming? (COL 415)?
 5. How do God's people receive comfort (40:1-8)? (Monday's lesson) What does preparing 'the way' mean (vs. 3-5; 43:16-17 cf. Exodus 15)? How does the New Testament apply this (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6)? What are the implications of this for understanding the Bible as a story?
 6. What is the meaning of 40:9-11? (Tuesday's lesson) Comfort is brought by 1) Yahweh's intention (vs. 1-2); 2) Yahweh's coming (vs. 3-5); 3) in spite of humanity's weakness (vs. 6-8) 4) Yahweh's rule (vs.9-11). While one voice speaks the word of doom (39:5ff), three different voices of comfort are mentioned (40:3, 6, 9) What is the character of this God who rules (vs. 9-11)?
 7. How does Isaiah 40 develop the themes of God's mercy and power? "God's mercy and power are interwoven and even blended together, because they are both necessary in order for God to save His people. He wants to save them, because He is merciful; He is able to save them, because He is powerful." (Wednesday's lesson).
 8. What is the problem with idolatry (40:18-20)? (Thursday's lesson) What kinds of idolatry do we face in more subtle forms today?
 9. What is the significance of vs. 28-31? What did they mean then and what do they mean now? How can a devotional reading of the Bible easily miss the storyline and the big picture?
 10. How is God bringing comfort to us today as individuals and as a community of faith?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

"At that time Merodachbaladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah welcomed them, and he showed them [now, what did he show them? What would you have shown them?] all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses." And can you see him, as he takes them through all this, interspersing his reports with the phrase, "The Lord has blessed me; the Lord has blessed me"? Have you ever noticed someone who seems to be unusually well endowed with this world's goods, often seems to have to say that every once in a while, "The Lord has blessed me; the Lord has been very good to me"? So Hezekiah may have been saying that all the way through, "The Lord has been very good to me." "There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them." Now, what's wrong with that?

"Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, 'What did these men say? And whence did they come to you?' And Hezekiah said, 'They have come from a far country,

from Babylon.’ He said, ‘What have they seen in your house?’ And Hezekiah answered, ‘They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.’”

And you know the end of the story. The visitors had taken note that it would be worth coming back to pick it all up. Now, what is the implication in all of this? What should he have done? It’s implied in the story. Should he have told them about his God? He didn’t mention him at all. Though he might have said, “The Lord has blessed me,” but the concentration was on all these material things. What I’ve wondered about is, at the present time, when the world comes to inquire, how do we respond? What do we want them to know? What do we Adventists want to be known for? Do we even want to be known for the fact that we may live a little longer than other people because of some good health habits? Is that the Gospel? Of course, it’s nice to be healthy and live longer, but is that the message? Is that what Job talked about? He was covered with boils.

Do we even want to show people how much the Lord has blessed us? Look at all the evidence that he’s blessing. Look at all our medical institutions. Look at Loma Linda. It’s magnificent. Those three towers, how they show up from the freeway, and indeed the Lord has blessed us. But is that the message? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 1 & 2 Chronicles*, recorded November 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/21MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/22MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distress, He is making arrangements for our deliverance. {OHC 316.4}

The enemy can never take out of the hand of Christ the one who is simply trusting in His promises. If the soul is trusting and working obediently, the mind is susceptible to divine impressions, and the light of God shines in, enlightening the understanding. What privileges we have in Christ Jesus! {SD 351.4}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to co-operate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

Promises are estimated by the truth of the one who makes them. Many men make promises only to break them, to mock the heart that trusted in them. Those who lean upon such men lean upon broken reeds. But God is behind the promises He makes. He is ever mindful of His covenant, and His truth endureth to all generations (MS 23, 1899). {7BC 942.12}

To His children today the Lord declares, "Be strong, . . . and work: for I am with you." The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. Could Christians realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them. They would acknowledge Him as their wisdom and efficiency, and He would bring to pass that which He desires to work out through them. {PK 576.1}

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. {PP 373.2}

The heart of Infinite Love yearns after those who feel powerless to free themselves from the snares of Satan; and He graciously offers to strengthen them to live for Him. {PK 316.3}

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. {LHU 219.8}

He is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the help they need. He will give them the wisdom which their varied necessities demand (*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 481, 482). {LHU 219.9}

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, "Follow Me," and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth. . . . {DA 480.1}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

The Captain of our salvation will not leave us to guide our own bark. We shall have His help and His wisdom just when He sees we need it.—Letter 24, Dec. 18, 1882, to W. C. White.

{TDG 361.6}

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, “and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, “God with us.” {DA 26.3}

Jesus presented the Father as one to whom we could give our confidence and present our wants. When we are in terror of God, and overwhelmed with the thought of His glory and majesty, the Father points us to Christ as His representative. What you see revealed in Jesus, of tenderness, compassion, and love, is the reflection of the attributes of the Father. The cross of Calvary reveals to man the love of God. Christ represents the Sovereign of the universe as a God of love. By the mouth of the prophet He said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). {HP 18.3}

God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion. “He will abundantly pardon.” He says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions.” . . . {OHC 27.4}

The Sun of Righteousness did not burst upon the world in splendor, to dazzle the senses with His glory. It is written of Christ, “His going forth is prepared as the morning.” Hosea 6:3. Quietly and gently the daylight breaks upon the earth, dispelling the shadow of darkness, and waking the world to life. So did the Sun of Righteousness arise, “with healing in His wings.” Malachi 4:2. {DA 261.3}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, “They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. {PP 91.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It

becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. {PP 596.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

As we try to become acquainted with our Heavenly Father through His word, angels will come near, our minds will be strengthened, our character will be elevated and refined, and we shall become more like our Saviour. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God; while the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things. {FE 443.1}

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. {COL 415.3}

This is the work outlined by the prophet Isaiah in the words, "O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." Isaiah 40:9, 10. {COL 415.4}

Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, "Behold your God." The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. {COL 415.5}